

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

“Can BioShield Effectively Procure Medical Countermeasures that Protect the Nation?”

April 18, 2007 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Emerging Threats, Cybersecurity and Science and Technology Subcommittee hearing entitled “Can BioShield Effectively Procure Medical Countermeasures that Protect the Nation?”:

“As Chairman Langevin noted, BioShield is a new program. That said, ‘new’ doesn’t necessarily equate with a license to make mistakes.

Yet, mistakes have been made with regards to the development and implementation of the program. I would like to believe that those were honest mistakes and that by doing proper oversight we can figure out what problems exist and address them. We need to get this program to a state where it is procuring enough medicine and vaccines to protect the American people.

To date, Project BioShield has only awarded contracts for immunizing against or treating anthrax, botulinum toxin and radiological sicknesses, even though the CDC has listed over 30 ‘select agents’ of concern. After the VaxGen contract cancellation, BioShield currently has contracts for 10 million doses of the ‘old’ anthrax vaccine currently used by the military, as well as two much smaller contracts for new anthrax treatments, one of which is held by our witness from Human Genome Sciences. Now the largest contract under BioShield is a \$363 million contract for 200,000 doses of botulinum antitoxin. The remaining contracts are for protection from radioactive materials.

These contracts account for nearly \$1 billion of the \$5.6 billion, 10-year BioShield fund and deal with only three agents, and not comprehensively by any measure. In contrast to this fund, Pfizer, for example, spends over \$7 billion annually on research and development.

Does this program make sense at all? Can it succeed if we identify the right problems? That is what we hope to answer today.”

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